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Educational Policy of the  
Unionist Party



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# The Educational Policy of the Unionist Party

AN ADDRESS GIVEN TO  
THE UNITED CLUB

BY

SIR RICHARD JEBB, M.P.,

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## THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY OF THE UNIONIST PARTY.

WHEN I had the honour of being invited to be the guest of the United Club this evening, and to speak on the educational policy of the Unionist Party, I had to consider in what manner I might best employ the opportunity which your kindness had afforded. My function, I remembered, was not simply to give an address, but to open a discussion. It seemed to me, then, that I should probably be most useful if I endeavoured to propound certain definite questions; to state some of the proposed solutions; and to indicate any difficulties which these proposals might suggest.

I will begin by a brief account of the existing situation.

Secondary Education in this country has

long suffered from the absence of any central control; from the overlapping jurisdiction of various authorities; and from the fact that there has been no systematic division of work among the schools. In some kinds of teaching work the supply has been redundant, in others defective. For a better organisation, the first essential was a Central Authority; the next is the creation of Local Authorities. A Central Authority was established in 1899. The old Education Department was properly concerned with Elementary Education only, and touched Secondary only at certain points. The Board of Education created in 1899 deals with all education below the University. But we are still waiting for Local Authorities. In 1900 the Lord President of the Council introduced in the House of Lords a Bill which was practically the Bill brought in this year, *minus* Clause 8, which was afterwards made necessary by the Cockerton judgment. That judgment was given at the end of 1900, and confirmed

on appeal last spring. School Boards can raise an unlimited rate for the Elementary Education of children. The Cockerton judgment decided that that rate cannot lawfully be applied to education of children which is clearly not elementary; nor to the free education of adults in evening continuation schools. The School Boards were thus debarred from using the school fund for certain higher grade schools which they were carrying on. But, until the new Local Authorities for Secondary Education should be at work, it was expedient to make some temporary provision for the carrying on of such schools. Hence Clause 8 in the Education Bill of last Session provided as follows (Clause 8):—‘Where a School Board, at the passing of this Act, is maintaining out of the school fund any school to which the school fund is not lawfully applicable, the Education Authority may empower the School Board to continue to carry on the school on such terms as may be agreed upon’ [*i.e.*, between the

Education Authority and the School Board], 'or, in default of agreement, determined by the Board of Education.' The Bill having been withdrawn towards the end of June, a short Bill was then passed, to serve the purpose of Clause 8 in the first Bill. It enacts that the council of the county or county borough, or any other local authority under the Technical Instruction Acts (1889 and 1891), may empower a School Board to carry on for one year from July 31, 1901, any school, in existence before that date, to which the school fund is not lawfully applicable.

When the first Bill was withdrawn on June 27, the Government intimated that legislation was only postponed. Mr Balfour said, 'our intention will be to give a very early and very honourable place to an Education Bill in the course of the forthcoming Session.' With regard to the Local Authorities for Education, which such a Bill will doubtless establish, the first question concerns the mode of constituting them.

## CONSTITUTION OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY.

If the method adopted in the Bill of this year be followed, the council of every county and county borough will frame a scheme for the constitution of an education committee. Every such scheme must provide that a majority of the members of the committee shall be members of the council, and that there shall be other members, male or female, not members of the council. That was the only express provision made in the Bill with regard to the composition of the education committee. It is evidently desirable that the committee should include some persons possessing a competent knowledge of educational matters. But the objection to prescribing that in the Bill is the difficulty, or perhaps impossibility, of framing a definition of such persons which would be suitable in every case. For the inclusion of such persons we must rely on the scheme, framed to meet the requirements and circumstances of each locality.

The scheme may also provide for the inclusion of some women as members. That scheme will be framed by the county or county borough council, which can receive advice, if desired, from the Board of Education, as to the general form in which the scheme should be drawn up. The scheme would then be sent to the Board of Education, which would publish it in the locality concerned, and, if necessary, hold a local inquiry. When finally approved by the Board of Education, the scheme would have effect as if enacted in the Act. If a council should have failed to make a scheme within twelve months after the passing of the Act, the Board would then make one, which would be laid before each House of Parliament for not less than 30 days.

On this plan the basis of the Local Authority for Education is the municipal body, which has already for several years exercised powers in regard to certain forms of technical and secondary education. With regard to the educational area, a certain elasticity will be allowed. The scheme

may provide for a joint education committee of two or more councils, or for a separate education committee for any part of a county.

### THE SCOPE OF THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY'S POWERS.

The next question which occurs is a most important one. Should the new Authority deal from the outset with Elementary as well as Secondary Education? When the Bill was brought in this year, the Vice-President stated that the new Authority was 'intended to supervise education of every kind, whether elementary, secondary or technical.' That is, it was intended ultimately to do so. In the Bill the power of the new Authority was actually limited to Secondary Education. It is high time that there was one Local Authority for schools of every grade. That is generally recognised. The difference between a primary and a secondary school depends less on the subjects taught than

on the general aim of the school, and the character of the instruction; and the chief factor in determining these is the leaving age of the pupil. Primary education, ordinary and higher, is, broadly speaking, that which is planned for a leaving age of 15 at the latest. In secondary education there are two main classes of schools; one, in which the normal leaving age is 16 or 17; and another, in which it is 18 or 19. Now it is desirable that, after the primary school, all children capable of profiting by it should continue their education. One of the functions of a Local Authority will be to provide, by scholarships and otherwise, for such continuity. But if the Authority is to be successful in adjusting the upper edge of Primary Education to the lower edge of Secondary, it should have supervision of both.

There are, then, some strong arguments in favour of investing the new Local Authority from the start with this comprehensive power. It is of urgent importance that our technical and

commercial education should not be merely such but should rest, as it does in some other countries,—in Germany especially,—on a liberal basis, *i.e.* on the general cultivation of the intelligence. But this cannot be effected until Primary and Secondary Education are properly co-ordinated. And this is a need which brooks no avoidable delay. Again the case of the denominational elementary schools claims early attention; not in the interests merely of any religious denomination, but in those of the nation, since such schools form a very large element in our supply of elementary instruction.

On the other hand, we must not ignore certain difficulties which are involved in the proposal to make the new Authority responsible at the outset for Primary Education as well as Secondary. Where School Boards exist, they are now the Local Authorities for primary education. There are School Boards which might at once be abolished without exciting much regret. But there are others, especially among

the larger School Boards in the great towns, which have done, and are doing, excellent work, and which derive prestige from a long and creditable history. There are places where probably the proposed abolition of the School Board would encounter much opposition. It has been suggested that a local option should be given as to whether a School Board should or should not continue to exist. But we must observe what the probable result would be. The weaker and less efficient School Boards would doubtless, as a rule, be abolished. But there would be a survival of the fittest. And a large School Board, which had lived through the ordeal of local option, would be in a stronger position than before. In that locality, then, it would be harder than ever to obtain our single Authority for schools of every grade ; unless, indeed, some arrangement could be made by which the School Board, deprived of separate rating powers, should be merely the agent of the new Local Authority. In stating this difficulty, I may point out that,

so far as it goes, it is an argument, not merely against an immediate transfer, but against a transfer at any time; indeed the difficulty would obviously be the greater, the longer the School Boards were left in possession of the field.

There is another argument which is used against an immediate transfer; viz., that the new Local Authority for Education will be overburdened, if it has to undertake both Secondary and Primary schools at the start. This objection might probably be felt in some cases: but it does not seem decisive. The new Authority should be able to deal with the larger task if, in framing the scheme, regard was had to the choice of persons respectively fitted to deal with each kind of education, and if the offices of the Authority were properly equipped and staffed for the twofold purpose.

This difficult question should be considered also with reference to the practical conditions of legislation. How does it affect the probable demand of the Education Bill on Parliamentary

time? Whatever shape the Bill may take, it will probably require a considerable amount of time. But it is to have (we understand) an early place in the programme: and it is a question of first-rate national importance. Suppose that the Bill is confined to Secondary Education. As, in that case, it will be only a part of the needed measure—the rest being relegated to an uncertain future—it will excite less enthusiasm among its supporters: while it will incur much opposition which would have been avoided or weakened if the Bill had dealt with Elementary Education also. It will still be possible to make speeches in debate about Elementary Education, and to move amendments with a view to enlarging the scope of the Bill. If, on the other hand, Elementary Education comes into the Bill, it is true that there will be an addition to the amount of controversial detail. But the Bill as a whole will be viewed in many quarters with more favour, and there will be a greater reluctance to lose it. Any calculation of this

sort must be vague and precarious. My point is merely this:—it seems unsafe to assume that, in this particular case, the narrower measure would take up less time than the larger. No doubt all this will be carefully weighed by those who are responsible for the framing of the Bill, and for the conduct of business in Parliament. But the Government are probably aware that among their supporters, in the House and outside of it, there are not a few who are disposed to think that the bolder course might be the wiser. A Bill, not necessarily of many clauses, which gave both Primary and Secondary Education to the new Local Authority, would have strong support both in Parliament and in the country. It would go far to settle a question of which the settlement is overdue.

#### LOCAL AUTONOMY IN PRIMARY EDUCATION.

Now suppose that the new Local Authority is to control Elementary Education as well as

Secondary. Is it desirable that, in respect to Elementary Education, a County Council should have direct control over all the boroughs in its area which are not County Boroughs? There are many towns, smaller than County Boroughs, yet of considerable size, which would have a fair claim to autonomy as regards Elementary Education, though not as regards Secondary. Their Elementary Schools have hitherto been managed without the interference of the County Council. But where should the line be drawn as to the size of the town? Perhaps at a population of about 20,000, or, at lowest, 15,000. Such a borough might, by devolution from the County Council, be entrusted with powers of management for Elementary Education, and might also be given separate rating-power for Elementary Education, while remaining under the County Council in respect to Secondary.

Boroughs of less than 15,000, and urban districts, might also have certain powers of management for Elementary Education dele-

gated to them by the County Council, though they were not given separate rating-powers.

A similar provision would be applicable to the case of London, which, as is generally agreed, will require special treatment in some respects. The London County Council will be able to frame its scheme for an Education Committee with a view to the special needs of the metropolis. That Committee would be the Local Authority for Secondary Education throughout the county of London, and would also be the Local Authority in chief for Elementary Education. But some degree of autonomy in regard to Elementary Education might justly be given to the London borough councils.

#### RATING-POWERS OF THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY.

What rating-powers should be given to the new Authority? The Bill of 1901 empowered the council of a county or a County Borough

to raise a rate of not more than 2*d.* in the pound for education other than elementary. An urban district council might also raise a rate of 1*d.* for education other than elementary, subject to agreement with the County Council as to the manner in which the money should be applied. The product of such rates would vary much in different places, and it may be doubted whether it would always be sufficient. In the case of Elementary Education, the rate would necessarily be unlimited, as it is now, since Elementary Education is compulsory, and therefore requires an elastic fund. It is to be remembered, with regard to any education rate which may hereafter be levied throughout a county, that in many places it will be an altogether new thing. Hitherto there has been an education rate only where there has been a School Board. Now, a district which has never had a Board School may have to pay an education rate, which would in part be applied to defraying expenses of schools in other districts also. It must be

the care of the Local Authority to see that, in return for the payment of the rate throughout the county, there shall be a more equable distribution of educational advantages over the whole area.

### DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS.

I wish now to touch on another question which is both urgent and difficult. Should rate-aid be given to denominational elementary schools ; and, if so, under what conditions ? A few years ago such an idea was equally distasteful to the friends and to the foes of such schools. But a considerable change of feeling has occurred. Many of those who dislike denominational schools have come to see that, if those schools perished, an enormous additional burden would be cast on the rates. Many supporters of the schools have come to think that rate-aid might be given under conditions which would satisfy reasonable opponents, with-

out endangering the principle of definite religious instruction. The ground common to both sides is that it is desirable to preserve every elementary school which is efficient. Great numbers of parents in this country desire definite religious teaching for their children. The type of school known as the voluntary school must be regarded as a large and a permanent factor in our national system. A Joint Conference of the Convocations of Canterbury and York has approved a scheme of rate-aid which commands wide-spread support. Its main features are, briefly, as follows. (1) The Managers of the denominational school shall provide the buildings, and shall be responsible for structural repairs and alterations, and for the rent (if any). (2) The Local Education Authority shall pay the salaries of the teachers, and all other costs of maintenance. (3) The Local Authority may appoint not more than one-third of the Managers of each assisted school. The Managers shall control the appointment and dismissal of teachers. (4) The

religious teaching in the school, always subject to a conscience clause, shall be according to the Trust deed of the school; or, if there is no Trust deed, according to the arrangements under which the school was established or has been conducted. (5) The Managers of the school shall, at the request of a reasonable number of parents, give opportunity for religious teaching in accord with the beliefs of the parents. (Suppose, *e.g.*, that the school is a Church of England school, but that a certain proportion of the pupils are the children of Nonconformists; the Managers might be required to permit such religious teaching as the latter could approve.) To the provisions of this scheme it might be desirable to add that the scale of salaries for teachers should be prescribed by the Local Authority, and should be the same, as far as possible, in denominational as in other Elementary Schools.

In considering these proposals, we must not ignore certain difficulties which they suggest.

For instance, (1) shall the Local Authority be compelled to aid any Voluntary School, reasonably efficient, which applies ; or shall it merely be allowed to do so, if it sees fit ? If the rate-aid is merely permissive, the income of the Voluntary Schools will be precarious. If compulsory, then, as has already been threatened, the old Church-rate war may in some places be renewed. (2) Again, the Local Authority might demand that the buildings of the Voluntary School should come up to a certain standard, and this standard might be such as to impose a very heavy outlay on the Managers. (3) Then suppose it to be decided that the Local Authority shall not bear the whole cost of maintenance, but merely contribute to it. Such contribution would probably be conditional on the school having some income from voluntary subscriptions. And a Local Authority adverse to denominational schools might fix the amount so high as to make it practically impossible that the school should obtain rate-aid.

The plan approved by the two Convocations is not, however, the only one that has been propounded. Here is another. A denominational school, instead of remaining under its present voluntary management, might transfer itself to the new Local Authority, under a proviso that the Local Authority shall carry on the school in accordance with the school's Trust deed, or, if there is no Trust deed, in accordance with the existing arrangements of the school in regard to religious teaching. Then, if the buildings were defective, it would rest with the Local Authority to improve or replace them. The school would belong to the Local Authority, which would bear the whole cost of maintenance. Now there are undoubtedly many places where this plan could be adopted without any danger to the denominational character of the school. In fact this course would probably be pursued in very many cases. Large numbers of Voluntary Schools might be thus transferred. But if in any place the Local Authority were

unfavourably disposed towards denominational education, the risk of such a transfer would be too great. For instance, the committee appointed by the Local Authority to manage the transferred school might select the teachers in such a manner as to destroy its denominational character.

Even, however, if this second plan were available only to a limited extent, it would be valuable as an alternative to the plan first-mentioned. A Voluntary School ought to have a choice between (at least) these two courses ; (1) retaining its present management, only with a certain representation of the Local Authority added, and receiving rate-aid under certain conditions ; (2) transferring itself to the Local Authority, under a proviso that its Trust deed, or its tradition, should be observed. Both these plans, to be really effective, presuppose the repeal of the Cowper Temple clause in the Act of 1870, which practically prevents denominational religious teaching in any rate-aided

school. But these plans also presuppose that a satisfactory substitute for that clause has been found in the conditions arranged between the denominational school and the Local Authority. A third scheme has found favour in some quarters. It is that all Elementary Schools should become in basis undenominational, but that in some or all of them any given denomination should be allowed, on paying for it, to have its own doctrines taught at certain times. It seems impossible that this plan should be successfully worked.

I have now referred, with necessary brevity, to a few of the urgent educational problems which confront us in the immediate future. It has been my endeavour, while stating some proposed solutions, to state also the difficulties which they seem to involve. Those who press proposals on a Government are sometimes apt to stop short in the guidance which they offer just at the point where the path becomes difficult. Our desire to-night, I take it, is to discuss educa-

tional policy as practical men must discuss it. If, in conclusion, I may venture to indicate two large questions on which the opinion of those present would be especially valuable,—I would say that the questions are these:—

(1) Ought the new Local Authority to be given powers for Elementary as well as Secondary Education in the Bill which is to be introduced next Session?

(2) Under what conditions, if at all, should rate-aid be given to denominational schools?



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